BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 09908 593 6

PRESENTED TO THE 2520.37

Public Library of the City of Boston

SICUT PATRIBUS SIT DEUS NOBIS.

BOSTONIA
CONDITA AD
1630.

CIVITATIS REGIMINE DONATA A.D. 1822

By George Ermerod, Esq.
Received Dec. 4, 1860. No. 43186

Boston Public Library

Do not write in this book or mark it with pen or pencil. Penalties for so doing are imposed by the Revised Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

This book was issued to the borrower on the date last stamped below.

B. P. L. FORM NO. 609; 10.26.32; 180M.

The Public Library of
the City of Boston
from the Author.

REMARKS

ON A

LINE OF EARTHWORKS IN THE PARISH OF TIDENHAM,

GLOUCESTERSHIRE,

KNOWN AS

OFFA'S DYKE,

EXISTING IN THE SAXON PERIOD,

AND TERMINATING ON THE SEDBURY CLIFFS,

NEAR THE JUNCTION OF THE ESTUARIES OF THE SEVERN AND WYE
WITH THE BRISTOL CHANNEL.

BY

GEORGE ORMEROD, D.C.L., F.R.S., F.S.A.,

OF TYLDESLEY AND SEDBURY PARK.

1859.

NOT PUBLISHED.

OFFA'S DYKE in its ascent towards its termination on the Sedbury Cliffs and the Shore of the Severn Estuary.

REMARKS

ON A

LINE OF EARTHWORKS IN THE PARISH OF TIDENHAM,

GLOUCESTERSHIRE,

KNOWN AS

OFFA'S DYKE,

EXISTING IN THE SAXON PERIOD,

AND TERMINATING ON THE SEDBURY CLIFFS,

NEAR THE JUNCTION OF THE ESTUARIES OF THE SEVERN AND WYE
WITH THE BRISTOL CHANNEL.

PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE

BY

GEORGE ORMEROD, D.C.L., F.R.S., F.S.A.,

OF TYLDESLEY AND SEDBURY PARK.

1859.

NOT PUBLISHED.

REMARKS ON EARTHWORKS AT SEDBURY, IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE, KNOWN AS OFFA'S DYKE,

AND PROVED BY THE DIPLOMATA ANGLO-SAXONUM TO HAVE EXISTED IN THE SAXON PERIOD.

43186

THE VIEWS OF OFFA'S DYKE, which this brief Memoir illustrates, represent a line of ancient earthworks, locally and traditionally considered to have been the southern termination of that celebrated line of demarcation between Mercia and Wales. Their position is within the Gloucestershire parish of Tidenham, and the grounds of Sedbury Park, about one mile north of the Wyemouth, and their lines are marked in the Ordnance Map, and in one given in *Archæologia*, vol. XXIX, p. 16.

The subjects of the Views are, severally,—I, the Ascent of the Dyke, from the eastern base of Buttinton Hill towards the Sedbury Cliffs; II, its termination thereon; and III, its appearance from the beach below.

It is scarcely necessary to mention that the ancient boundary line, known as OFFA'S DYKE, was formed between Mercia and Wales, in the latter part of the eighth century, and that the earthworks, or the limitary streams, which were sometimes unaccompanied by the line of mounds, ranged southwards, from the mouth of the Estuary of the Dee, through the present counties of Flint, Denbigh, Salop, Montgomery, Radnor, Hereford, Monmouth, and Gloucester, to the Wyemouth above mentioned.

Occasionally, when a river became the virtual boundary, the Dyke may also be found as an accompaniment to the actual limitary line. Thus, in the present instance, where the Wye was the real national boundary, a mound is drawn across the peninsula formed to the south of BUTTINTON HILL by that river and the Severn, at their confluence, and from other instances of similar arrangement, one may be selected which is opposite to Welchpool, and immediately south of the *Shropshire Buttington*, where the Saxon Dyke abuts on the *inland* stream of the Severn.*

A description of the northern and central portions of the Dyke was published by Pennant in 1793,† and later observations by Sir S. R. Meyrick and Fosbroke. These are referred to in a Memoir more particularly relating to its southern fragments, communicated by the writer of this to the Society of Antiquaries, and published by them in 1840.‡ A masterly account

---

* Ordnance Map LX, and the writer's personal observation.

† Tour in Wales, p. 278.

‡ Archæologia, xxix, 13.

of the entire line, with which parts of the last-mentioned Memoir were incorporated, was given subsequently by Mr. Longueville Jones.*

In the Memoir printed by the Society of Antiquaries, as before mentioned, attention was particularly turned to long, but occasionally discontinuous lines of earthworks, which range along the left bank of the Wye, from the vicinity of Tintern, to the point illustrated by the annexed Views, and which have borne the name of OFFA'S DYKE by unvarying tradition, although the Wye itself, which flows below them, was certainly, so far as concerns this district, the virtual boundary of Mercia.

It was purposely left as an open question, whether this discontinuousness was the result of original non-completion, or of early destruction, alleged to have been effected by the Welshmen of Gwent and Morganwg;† and it was also freely admitted, with reference to the point here represented, that a peninsula thus defended, by a line of earthworks crossing its base from the Wye to the Severn, might have been selected subsequently for a retreat by Danish pirates, as it certainly was by royalist troops in the seventeenth century,‡ when a small portion of the mounds on Buttinton Hill was the subject of limited readaptation. BUT THIS in no way disproves the *original object* of construction, and the discussion may at once be transferred to proof of existence of this part of the line in the Saxon period, and to its coincidence with the point assigned, equally by tradition and chronicles, to the southern termination of the entire demarcation.

I. With respect to such decisive evidence of Saxon antiquity, it is proved indisputably by a Charter of KING EDWY, granted to the SECULARS OF BATH, in 956, that the Dyke, here illustrated, was then a known boundary between CYNGESTUNE and UTANHAMME. The former of these is identified with SEDBURY, and the latter, or the outer hamlet, with BEACHLEY, by

---

* Archæologia Cambrensis, vol. ii, p. 1; third series.

† Archæologia Cambrensis, 3rd series, vol. ii, p. 152. The Article quoted states, on the authority of the Brut-y-Tywysogion, that in 776 the men of Gwent and Morganwg arose and destroyed Offa's Dyke, and that in 784 Offa made a Dyke nearer to him, leaving a *territorial space* between the Wye and the Severn. The space, thus said to have been abandoned by Offa, would accord with the district where the discontinuous lines of earthworks are found, namely that between Bridge Sollers, on the Wye above Hereford, and the Wyemouth. A theory founded on this would agree with an opinion communicated to the author in 1841 by the late Rev. T. Price (Carnhuanwc), of Cwmdu.

More will be found as to this aggression and as to Offa's colonization of the district between Wye and Severn, in Caradoc's Welsh Chronicle, edit. 1584, pp. 19, 20, and as to the aggression, in the Life of Offa II, appended to Wats's Matthew Paris, p. 17.

‡ Corbet's Siege of Gloucester; and Webb's Bibliotheca Gloucestrensis, pp. xcvii, 136.

the unchangeable boundaries of the Severn and Wye; and this is the intermediate position of the Dyke at the present day. *

II. It may be added, in confirmation of this Dyke, thus referred to the Saxon period, having been a portion of the Dyke ascribed to Offa, that its form, where unaltered, with its ditch on the Welsh side, and other coincidences, accords with that of the northern and more continuous portions of his work; and that the name of Offa's Dyke has been uniformly applied to it, as well by local tradition as by successive topographers.

III. It must be also remembered that the ancient authorities for the formation of the general demarcation itself—Asser, † Simeon of Durham, ‡ and the Polychronicon §—fix a southern termination, which will coincide with the Sedbury Cliffs, but with no other place. The two first bring it from "*Sea to Sea*," the last "from the south, near Bristol," and Camden founds on these statements, his deduction of it from the mouth of the Dee to the Wyemouth. ‖ Such limitation necessarily confines the southern termination to one point. It must be a point west of the Bristol Channel, or Severn Sea, as the Dyke had no continuation to the east of it. Sedbury would be the nearest convenient point to the mouth of the Wye, (the virtual boundary) upon its left, or its Mercian bank. No local point could combine these coincidences, excepting that point where the Dyke, as here delineated, rests on the Sedbury Cliffs, overhanging the broad estuary of the Severn, immediately north of its junction with the minor estuary of the Wye and commencement of the Bristol Channel.

---

* See Kemble's Diplomata Anglo-Saxonum, iii, 444, 450; and Memoirs of the Bristol Congress of the Institute, p. 52. The Survey annexed to the Charter here cited is partly abstracted and partly translated in Kemble's Saxons in England (i, p. 320), and the original will be found in the Diplomata, iii, pp. 444, 450. It sets out Dyddanhamme with its still existing boundaries (Wyemouth and Twyfyrd's Pool), and names its component hamlets, Strœt, now Stroat; Middeltune, now Churchend and Wibdon; Cyngestune, now Sedbury; Utanhamme, now Beachley; and Biscopestune, now Bishton. The Saxon name Cyngestune obviously refers to the Royal possession of the hamlet by Edwy, as the later name Sedbury probably refers to the Earthworks. The identification mentioned in the text follows. "At Cyngestune there are v hides and XIII yards rented, and I hide *above the Dyke which is now* also let for rent. And the Outer Ham (Utanhamme) is partly in demesne and partly rented by Welsh Shipmen. In Cyngestune there are in *Severn* XXI "cyt" weirs and in *Wye* XII.

† Monumenta Historica Britannica, p. 471. "Vallum magnum inter Britanniam et Merciam *de Mari in Mare.*"

‡ Ibidem, p. 672. "Vallum magnum inter Britanniam et Merciam id est *de Mari usque ad Mare.*"

§ Gale's XV Scriptores, i, p. 194. "Ab Austro juxta Bristolliam—se extendit in Boream."

‖ Camdeni Britannia, edit. 1607, p. 478. "A Devæ ostio usque ad Vagæ per LXXXX plus minus mille passus."

T. RICHARDS, 37, GREAT QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S-INN-FIELDS.

The Southern Termination of OFFA'S DYKE *on the Sedbury Cliffs overhanging the Severn Estuary.*

SEDBURY CLIFFS.

The Southern Termination of OFFA'S DYKE.